

Status Report

AUGUST 1995

It's a breeze!

Sailing for people with disabilities comes to Calgary

Calgarians Dale Keith, Kevin Siska and Anne Ina Mitchell are sailors. But, unlike most of the men and women who are drawn on warm, breezy summer days to the Glenmore Sailing Club on the city's south side, Mitchell, Siska and Keith have a disability. That is, until they get on the water.

"It's a totally equalizing sport," says Keith, who is the commodore of the recently established Disabled Sailing Association of Alberta (DSAA). "It's something that really doesn't involve strength. It's brain power and finesse, and understanding wind and water."

"Sailing provides you with a sense of freedom," says Siska, a board member of DSAA. "Having a disability means asking for more help.

But when you're out on the water, you're free from that." Fellow board member Mitchell agrees. "It's a free world out there. You don't have to stick to any path."

How did these three Calgarians with disabilities—and some sixty others—come to be sailors? The story begins in Great Britain. In 1986, as Man-in-Motion Rick Hansen prepared to return to Canada for the final leg of his journey, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher presented him with a Sunbird sailboat—a specially adapted boat that would allow paraplegics, quadriplegics and people with other mobility impairments to sail unassisted. In 1989, Hansen donated the boat to the Disabled Sailing Association of BC (DSABC), a fledgling organization started by Vancouver city

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councillor Sam Sullivan. DSABC grew under the guidance of Sullivan, a quadriplegic himself, and five years later, the organization had sixteen Sunbirds in three chapters located in Vancouver, Victoria and Kelowna.

Last year, Sullivan took a tour of B.C. and Alberta to show off one of the Sunbirds and the features that make it so suitable for disabled sailors—joystick-controlled rudder, special cleats, and the three hundred pound keel that makes it virtually impossible to capsize. In Calgary, the response was overwhelming, which resulted in Sullivan loaning the Sunbird to the Glenmore Sailing Club. Over a four week period, more than 150 Calgarians with disabilities experienced sailing on the Glenmore reservoir. For twelve of these new sailors, including Keith, Siska and Mitchell, the hook was set. At the end of the sailing season, they formed DSAA.

Over the course of the winter, DSAA embarked on ambitious fund-raising and membership recruitment campaigns. Membership swelled to about 90 people, with dozens more inquiring about joining. The fund-raising campaign, led by Steve Alvey, a Calgary businessman and fleet captain of the Glenmore Sailing Club, was even more successful. Alvey supplied business skills and

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DSAA board members San Patten, Dale Keith, Merle Hickey, Anne Ina Mitchell and Kevin Siska: Rick Hansen's legacy lives on

Message from the Chairperson

Why is disability gaining popularity?

Gary McPherson

Does disability carry a stigma? I have no reservation when I say that it has carried a strong stigma in the past, but I wonder if it's beginning to dissolve. Of course, this would be good news from the Council's perspective. Or would it?

When we look at seniors, a group of people whose belief system was forged decades ago, we can get a good idea of what kind of stigma disability carried in the past. Seniors do everything they possibly can to avoid appearing disabled. Many even put themselves at risk as an alternative to using a wheelchair or a walker.

On the other hand, younger generations seem to be a little more accepting of disability. For instance, our office is receiving an increasing number

of calls and letters from people looking for assistance as they seek to validate their claim of disability.

Even mental illness, which advocates have always maintained has carried the strongest of stigmas, seems to be gaining acceptance. The expression "taking a mental health day" has become a popular way of taking time off work. More significant is the burgeoning number of people who are taking long term disability leaves from their jobs because of stress-related disorders.

For people with disabilities and others who have long advocated on their behalf, this phenomenon can certainly be viewed in a positive light. When society at large appears to be more accepting of disability, that would certainly imply that more opportunities would present themselves to people with disabilities. They may be viewed in a more positive light when applying for jobs, asking for a bank loan, or simply walking—or wheeling—down the street.

At the same time, I believe there's a darker side to this trend. The question needs to be asked: why are these people all seeking to legitimize a disability? Is there an advantage to having a disability in this tumultuous climate? Do people feel having a disability results in a steady source of income to replace employment? Or has it become a cry for help, a last resort, a sign of giving up?

In varying degrees, I believe the answer to all of these questions is yes. The common sentiment expressed by so many people contacting our office for assistance is that they believe that they are unable to work, and they need help convincing insurance companies, government agencies, etc., that they have a disability. I believe that same sentiment is very much in evidence by many who request a paid leave of absence from a job because of stress or other mental health issues.

Therein lies the rub: for decades, those of us who have had a disability have simply asked for the chance to work. Now, it seems having a disability is being used more and more as a reason for not working. Frankly, I'm worried about the message this may be sending to society.

Consider the human resources manager of a large company who may be paying dozens of people while they take leave of absences for stress or other "workplace disabilities." What will the nature of this manager's reception be to the job seeker who already has a disability? Would the applicant be viewed with skepticism—not so much for their abilities, but rather their staying power? I fear it might be so.

There are, of course, many people who take leave from work for legitimate reasons. But the fact remains that the number of people taking long-term disability leave has skyrocketed in recent years. It certainly isn't a case of a plague of new disabling conditions. So let's not kid ourselves: most of these people wouldn't have been on long-term disability twenty or even ten years ago.

Perhaps the situation can be likened to unemployment insurance. Decades ago, the stigma attached to UI prevented widespread and long-term use. Now, in 1995, legions of people across Canada see it as a way of life. The stigma diminished and the floodgates were pushed open.

What happened? I believe, and I know I'm not alone, that our society simply made it too easy and too lucrative a prospect to abuse this program. An element of human nature—at least in some humans—appears to be a tendency to take advantage of loopholes. A major problem for today's government is arresting the runaway costs of this program and closing the loopholes.

A similar problem now exists for government and insurance companies in the arena of disability-related income replacement and other benefits. Ways must be found to return workers on long term disability to productivity. Failing to do so will result in making negative role models for people with disabilities who have never worked.

This Council has fought long and hard to increase employment opportunities for Albertans with disabilities. Our position remains consistent—people with disabilities can contribute to our economy, particularly with technology providing an increasing level playing field. With this position, there is also a built-in understanding that there are some people who have disabilities that simply make it impossible to work. But I believe they are the exception, not the rule.

I'm all for taking the stigma out of disability—but for the right reasons. Disability must not become a person's most convenient choice for leaving a job and collecting income support. ●

"The question needs to be asked: why are all these people seeking to legitimize a disability?"

Status Report

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Status Report is published quarterly by the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities and is intended to provoke discussion of issues concerning persons with disabilities. **This publication is also available on audio cassette** by contacting our office at:

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The Community Rehabilitation Program

The facts and fallacies about Alberta Health's newest initiative

Rumours are flying about the new Community Rehabilitation Program, which replaces five therapies: audiology, occupational therapy, physical therapy, respiratory therapy and speech language pathology. Among the nastier of the rumours is the suggestion that people with disabilities and seniors with high needs will have trouble accessing services.

The reality is that the new program has been designed to improve access for people who have a high need. In the review leading up to the development of the program, several key problems with the existing service delivery system were identified. Included were the dramatic increase in physical therapy billings for minor conditions and the rise in the number of practicing physical therapists, especially in urban areas.

But the most pressing issue was the shortage of services for ambulatory clients with complex rehabilitation needs. Bringing the five therapies

under one program will result in better coordination of services for people with complex and high needs.

In order to improve services for these clients, services may be reduced or denied to clients with low priority needs. Resources will also be distributed more equally throughout the province, and many people with high needs who haven't been able to access services in the past should see a significant improvement.

Another important point for people with high needs is that previously, only \$250 of physical therapy per year was covered by Alberta Health Care. There is now no limit. And co-payment, or charging clients additional fees, will be strictly prohibited.

All clients will be assessed to determine eligibility and priority. Low priority clients will have the option of paying 100% for their physical therapy services.

The Community Rehabilitation Program is based on several key principles. It will remove financial and geographic barriers to important services. It will ensure that access is provided on the basis of need and not ability to pay. And only those services having demonstrable benefit or potential for benefit will be publicly funded.

It should be noted that \$25.8 million has been allocated to physical therapy—the same amount physical therapists billed Alberta Health Care for in the last fiscal year. But in order to provide more equitable service in all regions, three regions will receive significantly less funds than last year—Calgary (20% less), Edmonton/St. Albert (25% less) and Ft. McMurray (44% less).

Billed services in these regions were significantly higher than those in other regions. For more facts about physical therapy utilization, see page eleven. ●

Disabled Sailing Association of Alberta

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corporate contacts, through which the organization raised enough funds to purchase three new boats for the 1995 season. "I don't honestly think we'd be in the position we're in now without Steve," says Keith.

Unlike the Sunbirds, which were adapted for use by people with disabilities, the three new boats have been designed specifically for them. The boats are easier to control and get in and out of. They even have built-in capability for sip and puff controls, which allow someone with total paralysis to sail.

Besides offering members the opportunity to learn sailing (instructors are hired as needed), DSAA offers group cruises on larger boats for various disability organizations like CPA and the MS Society. The goal, according to Membership Coordinator Merle Hickey, is to give a taste of sailing to anyone who wants it. "What we hope is that once we get going here, it will spawn other groups throughout the province, wherever there's water and people."

"Once you experience it, I guarantee you're pretty much hooked," adds Keith, who admits he thought sailing was "totally useless" when he was first asked to give it a try.

Last year, Keith competed in the Mobility Cup, an annual regatta for sailors with disabilities organized by Sam Sullivan and members of DSABC. He's champing at the bit to compete again at this year's regatta, which will be held in Victoria from August 16 to 20. But he's quick to concede he needs more practice—last year, he was soundly trounced by many more skilled sailors, including Vancouver's Larry Boden, a high quad who used sip and puff controls to place fourth overall.

"It becomes not a matter of 'I'm bigger than you,' or 'you can run faster than me,'" says Keith. "It's a matter of who's a better sailor. It's a total equalizer. That's why I love it." ●

For more information, contact DSAA, #185, 200 Rivercrest Drive S.E., Calgary AB T2C 2X5 tel. (403) 238-0689.

Thumbs up...

...to the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal, which upheld the second degree murder conviction of Robert Latimer. Latimer murdered his severely disabled daughter in 1994, and was sentenced to serve ten years in prison—the weakest term possible under the law. Latimer intends to appeal again, this time to the Supreme Court of Canada.

Thumbs Down...

...to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), which is quickly absolving itself of all responsibility to assist development of social and accessible housing in Alberta. Last year, CMHC bowed out of a partnership with the provincial government which financed various social housing projects in Alberta. This year, CMHC will scrap the RRAP program, which helps homeowners with disabilities offset the high cost of renovating homes for accessibility.

Executive Director's Update

Community Supports: a bad idea, or bad timing?

Fran Vargo

In 1989, when individuals, their families and advocates talked about the difficulty they had accessing personal and technical supports to live in the community, they asked for things like one stop shopping, removal of age barriers to access, and good information about what was available.

Since the inception in 1990 of the concept called Community Supports, there has never been a year when the Premier's Council has not put significant energy and resources into the development of this idea. Between 1990 and 1993, we were told it was just too big, too progressive and government would never buy into the concept. Programs changed, barriers to access were reduced, and innovations in service delivery appeared, but people said it wasn't enough.

In 1993, apparently in keeping with the overall changes in the provincial government, Community Supports received renewed interest. A consultative process conducted by the Council and the Access Now Coalition determined that consumers were still interested in consolidated funding for supports. Service providers were less enthused. The main concern on everyone's mind seemed to be, "where will the program resources be consolidated?" Many suggested that a completely new and independent body, like a commission, be created. Given the mood in government to downsize, we suspected this would be impossible but persevered to see the vision of

a single window of access realized in the best way possible.

The 1993-94 task force and its support staff were able to produce a document that described how Community Supports could and should work. It would be foolish to say that there was complete consensus on every aspect of the report, but there was agreement about which existing programs would be consolidated first, which would be moved over the next two years, and which needed further discussion and examination.

The short ending to this story is that a recommendation went forward from the task force that Community Supports become a reality over a period of time; it passed two Standing Policy Committees, Cabinet and Caucus; and a new task force was appointed to design the implementation.

But, barring Cabinet intervention, Community Supports, as it has been envisioned since 1990, will not happen. The task force has been disbanded and the Health department has taken responsibility for developing a plan for the Regional Health Authorities (RHAs) to implement community services for people who currently access Home Care and AADL.

What went wrong? Everything and nothing, depending on whether you agreed with the vision or not. Health and the RHAs were strongly rejected as the home for Community Supports by people who did not want a 'medical model'. The reality is that most people get their supports from

Health programs now and will continue to do so. Although the 'medical model' has not operated in Home Care or AADL, the threat of such influence was the flame that fuelled the fire of objections. While a vocal minority let government know its feelings on the subject of governance, the majority remained characteristically silent.

It is truly unfortunate that new ideas are hard to communicate and even harder to accept. Vulnerable people can quickly become pawns in the inevitable power struggles that emerge in times of change, and rarely get the opportunity to voice informed opinions about issues that can dramatically affect them.

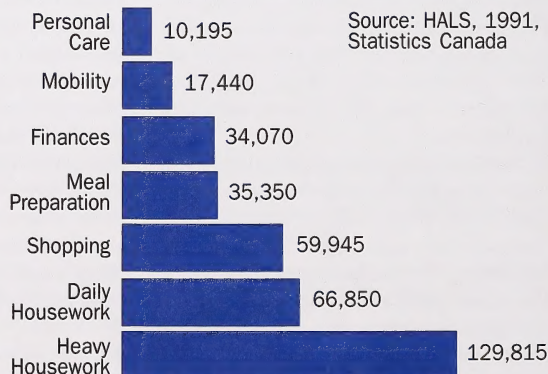
What happens next? Health is proceeding with a functional plan for the RHAs that will address community services consisting of information/service coordination and personal and technical supports. The resources will be those from Home Care, AADL and the Early Intervention Program. Family and Social Services will continue to serve only people with developmental disabilities for the foreseeable future.

Many of the small urban/rural RHAs are reported to be very open to the Community Supports concept. A missing component for them at this time is access to an information database of other programs and services that will complement the services RHAs provide. The Alberta Information Network (AIN) will fill that gap. For an update on AIN, see page seven. ●



Use of Personal Supports in Alberta

Albertans with disabilities rely on many supports provided by other people** to live and contribute in their communities.*



Source: HALS, 1991, Statistics Canada

*age 15 and over; residing in households **includes friends, family and service providers

More adapted keyboards

The WinMini might be your input answer

In the May issue of *Status Report*, we featured two adapted keyboards for use by people with little or no dexterity in their hands and arms. Here's another input device we felt was worth taking a look at—particularly since it's made by a Canadian company and sells for considerably less than comparable models available from the U.S.

The WinMini is a small size keyboard that plugs directly into a PC. It's suitable for people with fine motor skills who require an alternative keyboard with a small surface area, closely spaced keys, and extreme sensitivity.

Besides standard keyboard entry functions, the WinMini also controls mouse functions. It's available in standard keyboard layouts or a layout based on frequency of use, where commonly used letters are placed towards the center of the keyboard to minimize fatigue.

A Mac version with identical features is also available; it's called the MacMini.

The WinMini and MacMini keyboards are sold by TASH Inc., short for Technical Aids & Systems for the Handicapped. TASH is a non-profit corporation that operates under the auspices of the Canadian Rehabilitation Council for the Dis-



abled (CRCD). TASH's business is mainly the development of switches, environmental controls, and computer access/communication devices for people with disabilities. For more information on

the WinMini or MacMini keyboards, or to receive a catalog of other devices developed by the company, contact TASH Inc., Unit 1 - 91 Station Street, Ajax, Ontario L1S 3H2 tel. 1-800-463-5685. ●

Last chance for renovation assistance

Federal assistance program on the ropes

A federal government program designed to assist people with disabilities modify their homes is being eliminated at the end of this year.

RRAP, or Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program, is a Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) initiative. It offers financial assistance for low income homeowners to renovate their dwellings so they are more accessible to persons with disabilities.

Financial assistance is provided in the form of low-interest loans which may not have to be paid back in their entirety. The loan amount depends on your income and the cost of the repairs. The maximum loan available is \$18,000. Depending on factors such as your income and the length of

time you remain in your home, up to \$12,000 may be forgivable and not have to be paid back.

Eligible modifications include ramps, chair lifts, bathtub lifts or wheel-in showers, height adjustments to kitchen counters and cupboards, widened doorways, and communication/alarm devices for people with sensory impairments. Modifications already completed or started prior to loan approval are not eligible.

RRAP officially ends on December 31, 1995. A replacement for the program isn't expected.

Note that the Alberta government has a similar program in place—the Enhanced Home Adaptation Program (HAP), which is administered by Municipal Affairs. Like RRAP, HAP is slated to be terminated in the near future—De-

cember 31, 1996, to be exact. The Premier's Council is currently seeking ways to have the program extended.

HAP gives grants of up to \$5,000 to offset the cost of renovations to make homes accessible for people who use wheelchairs. Like RRAP, household income is used to determine who is eligible for the program.

For more information about HAP, contact Municipal Affairs at 427-5760 in Edmonton (contact the RITE operator at 310-0000 elsewhere in the province).

For more information about RRAP in your community, contact CMHC offices in Edmonton at 482-8700 or call Reference Canada at 1-800-667-3355 or TDD 1-800-465-7735. ●

Barrier free design dilemma

We have the technology...but do we have the will?

Diane Earl, Director of Research and Policy Review

In the past three decades, our environment has become largely accessible. Our sidewalks, our public facilities, and our businesses are providing increasing access to people with disabilities, including people with sensory impairments as well as people who use wheelchairs. Yet in some key areas—predominantly those new or renovated buildings where developers, designers and architects are key players—change is frustratingly slow.

Take, for example, the recent renovation of the Edmonton Coliseum, where only last minute intervention by this Council prevented the level of service for wheelchair users from actually being worse after work was completed. And despite requirements written directly into the Building Code requiring tactile warning tiles on the floor for people who are visually impaired, no effort was made to address this area until, again, the Council intervened.

The problem, I believe, is that many schools of architecture have not included barrier free design in their curriculum. As a result, many architects do not have a good understanding of the need for barrier free design. Further, I believe many developers and designers see barrier free



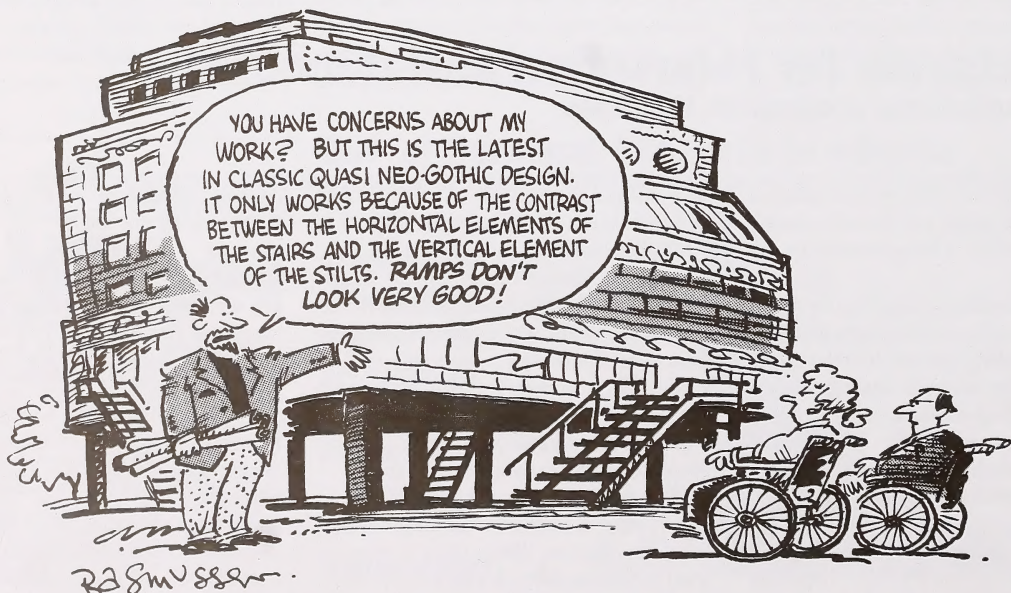
Diane Earl

design as costly and aesthetically displeasing. I would say many designers and developers see the barrier free section of the building code as a source of frustration which must be complied with rather than a tool to be used to design facilities which are accessible for all people. And I believe that many barrier free design advisory committees—I am a member of one—are often not recognized for their expertise but rather are seen as representatives of special interest groups.

What's the solution? I am convinced that buildings constructed with barriers have not been done so with any malicious intent. Rather, they've been designed by people who are ignorant of the access needs of people with disabilities. So it's essential that developers and designers become more enlightened about the needs of people who will eventually use the facilities. At the same time, consumers and their advocates must educate themselves regarding the requirements of the building codes. There must then be dialogue between the two parties if change is to take place. This will only happen when consumers or their advocates become more proactive and address their concerns with planners, designers, developers, and building inspectors.

For example, if you want to talk about concerns or problems you may have encountered in a new or renovated facility, you can contact municipal planners, the people involved in the design of a particular facility, or the building inspectors. You might be pleasantly surprised at the response.

Recently, the Premier's Council and the Alberta Council on Aging contacted the City of Edmonton to discuss our concerns about the increasing use of paving stones on city sidewalks and to suggest



some possible solutions which would provide for a safer and improved barrier free path of travel. City officials were grateful for the opportunity to learn about our concerns. They contacted local landscape architects who design the sidewalks to advise them of our concerns and to suggest that perhaps there may be alternative ways to use the paving stones and still ensure a safe pedestrian pathway.

On a larger scale, there will be an excellent opportunity to take a stand and make your views known on barrier free access early in the new year when the 1995 Alberta Building Code will be circulated for public input. The Barrier Free Design Committee, which includes people with disabilities, architects, inspectors, people representing the construction and building industries, and people from the municipal and provincial levels of government, has done excellent work in reviewing the code and presenting recommendations for change to the Safety Codes Council. I would strongly encourage people with disabilities and those who represent them to contact Paul Mousseau, who is the Code Development Advisor for the Department of Labour (427-8265), and ask that he put you on a mailing list to receive a copy of the proposed 1995 code. Most importantly, make your views known during the public

review process. If the Safety Codes Council only hears opposition to the changes which have been recommended, they may feel compelled to turn

"...only recently have we targeted schools of design and architecture as a missing piece in the puzzle."

down recommendations intended to improve access for people with disabilities.

You may be wondering: is the Premier's Council planning to address concerns regarding barrier free access? From its inception, we've attempted to play a major role—with considerable success—in influencing policy in this area. But only recently have we targeted schools of design and architecture as a missing piece in the puzzle.

We now recognize that education is the key to a future where facilities are automatically designed

without barriers. Initial discussions have begun with the Faculty of Architecture at the University of Calgary—our province's only degree program in architecture—about the need for a barrier free design workshop to be held in conjunction with a design award for students.

Early indications look positive for this project. It would include an opportunity for students to dialogue with persons with disabilities about their access requirements and meet "enlightened" architects to discuss how to design buildings which are accessible for all people. Students may then be asked to design a building incorporating what they have learned about the accessibility needs of people with disabilities. An award would be given for the best design. We feel strongly that this must be an ongoing opportunity for learning and we will work toward that end.

If successful, the Council will also attempt to introduce similar initiatives in diploma programs at technical colleges such as NAIT and SAIT.

When we all do our part to increase the awareness of the need for barrier free access, and when educational institutions begin to offer their students a learning opportunity which includes barrier free design, we will one day have a society in which we can all live and participate without having to give accessibility a second thought. ●

Information on demand

Introducing AIN Internet

The Alberta Information Network (AIN), the Premier's Council's attempt to offer easy access to information about disability-related programs and services offered by government and community organizations, is back on track.

For lack of a better name, we are now referring to this project as AIN Internet because Internet is the vehicle that people will use to access this information system.

AIN Internet will be housed on a government "server" maintained and operated by the Public Works department (PWSS). Their staff have been very helpful and supportive as we move towards making AIN Internet available.

Another department which has been very cooperative in supporting the concept is Family and Social Services (FSS). Together with FSS systems staff, the Premier's Council has devel-

oped a prototype of AIN Internet that will be used for demonstration and to solicit feedback from several key stakeholders.

Information available on AIN Internet will be gathered in a number of ways. For instance, FSS currently has service agency directories in electronic form that could be converted to AIN Internet format. Verification and updating may be necessary, but the bottom line is that a wealth of information about services in every corner of the province may be easily added to AIN Internet by using these directories.

The Premier's Council will also be contacting community agencies and service providers shortly with a standard profile sheet that can be used to input information about the agency and its services. Any agency that wishes to have this information included in AIN Internet will be asked to complete and return the form.

Maintaining currency of information is always an issue for databases—inaccurate information is often worse than no information. This means that the kind of information that is entered and available on AIN Internet will be limited in certain ways to minimize the need for updates. For example, names of agency staff or board members will probably not be included, but addresses and telephone numbers will.

Once AIN Internet becomes accessible on the PWSS server, anyone with Internet access will be able to use this database. The Council realizes that a limited number of individuals with disabilities and organizations currently have such access, so we will be pursuing other access solutions like a toll-free telephone line to connect with an information officer who has a computer in front of them and can do the search requested.

Stay tuned for further developments. ●

Breaking trail: first Red Deer, then the world

A Red Deer Boy Scouts troop takes an integrated approach

Cliff Bridges, Council Communications

It's a radical approach in a time-honoured institution.

Two years ago, the Alberta Special Needs Boy Scout Troop, based out of Red Deer, opened their doors to youths with disabilities. Currently, of the Troop's forty scouts, eight have disabilities including cerebral palsy and Down syndrome.

For some nine decades, the Boy Scouts organization has sought to transform young boys into honourable men through exposure to positive life experiences and the great outdoors. According to Phil Stephan, troop Scouter of the Alberta Special Needs Troop, many troops around the globe, including some in Canada, have recently made efforts to include disabled youths. But Stephan says their participation tends to be on the fringe. "There are fragmented approaches in other troops across the country—a single boy here, a single boy there. To our knowledge, this is the first time in Scouts Canada that an integrated troop of this size has been developed. We're the only special needs troop going to the World Jamboree, and there will be 30,000 youths there."

The idea for a special needs troop took hold at the 1993 Canadian Jamboree (a Jamboree is like a "convention" of boy scouts). Several troops had scouts with a disability, and they caught the eye of Stephan and fellow troop leader Dennis Guenther. "It started out as a bit of a hope and dream," says Guenther, who is now Group Committee Chairman of the Alberta Special Needs Troop. "Seeing these disabled youths around us and the opportunities they were hav-

ing, and knowing we had kids around us that just weren't getting that, we asked ourselves, 'Why can't we do this?'"

It turned out they could do it, although Stephan and Guenther both concede it took a considerable effort. There was the matter of funding—Stephan says \$100,000 was required for the two year project. The National and Provincial Boy Scout Foundations, the Alberta Paraplegic Foundation, the Alberta Association for Community Living, the Easter Seals Ability Council, the Winnifred

Stewart Foundation and the Parkland Community Living and Support Society made the project possible with major contributions. The troop also had to recruit many of the disabled boys, who had never been involved in the Boy Scouts before.

Now, two years later, the pair see their efforts paying off for everyone involved. "It's like a light that's been turned on for a lot of the youths," says Stephan. Scott Nielson, a seventeen year old who has been scouting for five years, agrees. "I've learned quite a bit about people with special

needs," says Nielson, who often helps out Brad Ferguson, another seventeen year old who has Down syndrome. "I can be their friend; I can talk to them. I can be in just about any situation and not feel uncomfortable. Overall, this experience has probably made me a much better person. It's taught me patience and skills that I can use for the rest of my life."

Obviously, the opportunity to have positive peer relationships has also had a significant impact on the boys with disabilities. "There's some things I can't do, but I do what I can," says Michael McAinsh, a thirteen year old with cerebral palsy who is currently working towards his Chief Scout Award—the highest level a scout can achieve. "It's given me a lot of skills that have resulted in me being more independent in a lot of ways."

McAinsh and Nielson both point out that the integrated approach has resulted in the troop getting along better. "There's no fights, there's no arguments," says Nielson. "Everyone in the whole troop has learned patience and how to deal with situations."

Guenther adds that the whole integration process has had a positive impact on the leaders,



Netherlands bound: Scouts Michael McAinsh, Brad Ferguson and Scott Nielson



Alberta Special Needs Troop Scouter Phil Stephan and Chairman Dennis Guenther: taking a message to the world

who are usually parents of the boys in the troop. "It's been a great experience. It's opened our eyes and maybe taken away some of the prejudices that we have developed over the years of seeing disabled kids and saying, 'Gee, I feel sorry for them.' Now it's, 'Hey, there's nothing wrong with these guys.' They're real, and we have a lot of fun together."

Two years of organization culminates this August when the troop heads off to the Netherlands for the World Jamboree—the granddaddy of Jamborees, with troops representing over thirty

countries. Stephan and Guenther want to use the event as a stage to get their message out.

"We have to break down the barriers and the prejudices that make people afraid to become involved with these young people who have disabilities and of working with them," says Guenther. "It's a matter of accepting them for who they are and what they are and their limitations."

"We want to challenge other leaders," adds Stephan. "Leaders have to recognize that if participation of disabled boys is going to take place,

they have to look within their communities and actively recruit these kids and facilitate inclusion. That's the message that we're trying to send when we go to the World Jamboree.

"We want to send a message to the community—both in and out of Scouts—that disabled youth can move in from that fringe and become active participants, and be valued as active participants, on the inside of youth organizations."

The message is a good one, and its power comes from example. With any luck, it will be heard all over the world. ●

Removing Barriers

Another battle won for accessibility

A recent legal decision in Ontario has resulted in a clear victory for people who use wheelchairs.

On March 28, 1995, a Board of Inquiry appointed by the Ontario Human Rights Code ruled that accessibility requirements stipulated under the Human Rights Code take precedence over the Ontario Building Code. It subsequently ordered a chiropractic office to build a ramp in order to provide wheelchair access.

The case involved Tanyes Quesnel, who has spinal muscular atrophy, and Dr. Robert Eidt, a

chiropractor at the London Educational Health Centre. It seems that Quesnel made an appointment with Eidt, but when she arrived at his office in the newly renovated London Educational Health Centre, she found the building to be completely wheelchair inaccessible. That's when she filed a human rights complaint.

The Board of Inquiry agreed with Eidt that the building complied with the Ontario Building Code. But it ruled that inaccessibility of the chiropractor's office constituted discrimination against Quesnel. It went on to rule that in any

event the Human Rights Code has supremacy over the Building Code, and that "compliance with Building Codes does not, in itself, justify a breach of human rights legislation."

The Board also rejected Eidt's argument that building a ramp would cause undue financial hardship, which is a defence under the Human Rights Code. In making this decision, the Board noted that Eidt's practice was profitable and that the cost of the ramp was tax deductible, which considerably reduces its actual cost. ●

Recommended reading

A manual for job seekers with disabilities; an accessibility reference for Canadian cities and towns

Looking for a job? While authors Gary Annable and Rob McInnes make it perfectly clear that their book isn't necessarily a sure path to employment, *Tried and True* contains a wealth of tips for anyone with a disability seriously looking for work.

It deals with subject matter rarely dealt with in generic job search manuals: discussing your disability with prospective

employers, discussing job accommodations, and dealing with objections related to your disability. Networking, resume writing, and dealing with the interview are other examples of areas covered by this book.

Tried and True is a powerful "how to" book that is sure to provide encouragement to any would-be employee with a disability. Why? It doesn't preach to people. Instead, it relies on the comments and insights gained from interviews with dozens of Canadians with disabilities, all of whom are successfully employed in a diversity of occupations.

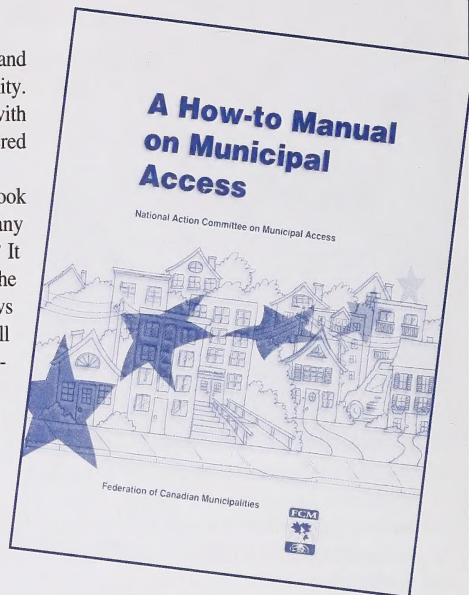
Tried and True is published by the Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work (CCRW). At \$16.25 per copy, it's a bargain. For more information, contact CCRW, 410-167 Lombard Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 0T6 tel. (204) 942-4862 TDD (204) 944-0341.

Another recently published manual is the *How-to Manual on Municipal Access* by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. Intended as a guide to assist elected officials and municipal employees in their efforts to make their communities accessible for persons with disabilities, the contents are as clear as the title.

Included in this 45 page manual is a straightforward description of barriers faced by many people with disabilities in

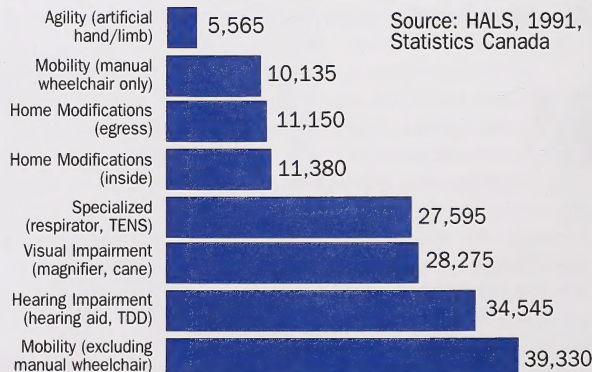
their communities and a comprehensive checklist that will allow municipalities to pinpoint their exact level of accessibility. That's followed by a section that explains the intricacies—or lack of them—in making communities accessible, including the development of a reasonable, attainable action plan. Case examples and a thorough list of resources complete this easy-to-follow guide.

Contact the Federation of Canadian Municipalities at (905) 642-6642 for details. ●



Use of Technical Supports in Alberta

Albertans with disabilities* rely on a wide variety of technical supports to live and contribute in their communities.



Source: HALS, 1991, Statistics Canada

*age 15 and over, residing in households

Facts about use of physical therapy in Alberta

Source: Alberta Health (1995)

One of the most contentious issues arising from the recent announcement of the Community Rehabilitation Program is the future of physical therapy in the province. In the aftermath of the announcement, many rumours and inaccuracies about physical therapy were reported. What follows is some facts about this service.

Between 1981 and 1992, payments to physical therapists in the private sector rose from \$10 million to \$32.2 million.

Over the same period, the number of clients increased from a few hundred in the early 1980s to 160,000 in 1992. 21,800 clients were seniors, aged 65 and over. Not only did the number of clients seeking physical therapy

increase, so did the average number of visits per client: in 1985-1986, clients saw their therapists an average of 7.8 times and an average of 8.3 times in 1991-1992.

The rise in utilization is attributed to a number of factors:

- the number of private physical therapists rose from 29 to 599 between 1981 and 1992;
- early discharge from hospital is shifting the need from institutions to community;
- the public is more aware of health promotion and illness/injury prevention and the potential usefulness of early intervention;

- increased participation in sports and physical fitness is resulting in an increase in injury;
- and the fee-for-service billing mechanism rewards volume as opposed to time-consuming, intensive treatment.

Demand for rehabilitative services is expected to grow due to an increasing number of disabilities in persons of all ages, the growing proportion of seniors in our population, and an increased awareness of the benefits of physical therapy.

Alberta provides the most comprehensive coverage of community-based rehabilitation services of any province.

Coming events

Seminars, symposiums, conferences, meetings

The Calgary Learning Centre presents its 8th Annual Summer Institute. August 21 to 23, 1995, at the University of Calgary. Theme: Taking Action: Practical Strategies for the Inclusive Classroom. Contact: The Calgary Learning Centre, 3939 - 20th Street S.W., Calgary, AB T2T 4Z9 tel. 686-9300.

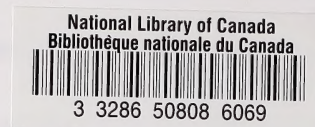
Alberta Association for Community Living and the Developmental Disabilities Resource Centre of Calgary present Home is Where the Heart is: a one day workshop. September 23, 1995, at the AACL Building in Edmonton. Theme: a workshop on home ownership and creating a sense of home for persons with developmental disabilities and their families. Contact: AACL, 11724 Kingsway Avenue, Edmonton, AB T5G 0X5 Tel. (403) 451-3055 or toll free 1-800-252-7556

The Canadian Paraplegic Association (Alberta) presents their Provincial Conference and Trade Show. October 5 and 6, 1995, at the Marlborough Inn, Calgary. Theme: Opening Doors to Active Living in the 21st Century. Contact: Betty McIsaac at 424-6312.

The Canadian Association of Rehabilitation Professionals and the Canadian Association for Vocational Evaluators and Work Adjustment present a vocational rehabilitation conference. October 11 to 13, 1995 at the World Trade & Convention Centre in Halifax, N.S. Theme: Whose Rehab is it anyway? Contact Conference Co-Chairs Warren Comeau and Neil Pierce, c/o Rehabilitation Alternatives Limited, Box 3511, Saint John, New Brunswick E2M 4Y1.

Is your association or agency sponsoring a provincial or national conference or workshop? If so, please forward the pertinent information to: The Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities
250, 11044 - 82 Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta T6G 0T2
Tel: 422-1095 (Edmonton)
or 1-800-272-8841 (rest of Alberta)
Fax: 422-9691

The Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention presents Building Connections for Suicide Prevention Annual Conference. October 11 to 14, 1995, in Banff. Theme: preventing suicide. Contact: The Suicide Information & Education Centre at 245-3900 (Calgary).



Policy Watch

Potential problem areas in policy affecting Albertans with disabilities

Education

- Will the **new funding formula** for education become an excuse to cut services to children with disabilities?
- Will children with mild and moderate disabilities have their needs ignored as a result of separate funding not being identified?

Housing

- Now that CMHC is closing the **RRAP program**, will Alberta Municipal Affairs proceed with the dismantling of the **HAP program**?
- If both governments are getting out of the business of assisting in social housing/accessibility renovations, how will the private sector be enticed to fill the void?

Training

- What will the **impending changes in federal funding transfers** mean for VRDP programs in Alberta?
- Will vocational services for people with developmental disabilities become part of the provincial mandate of Advanced Education and Career Development?

Beware of EMI

Stray radio waves, it seems, can really ruin your day

I imagine zipping down the street in your power wheelchair when suddenly, as if possessed, it stops responding to your control, instead does a 180 and takes off at full speed over a bank. Well, as viewers of a recent edition of CBC's Market Place heard, that's exactly what happened to Jim Hill of Denver.

Hill ended up in hospital with a broken hip, among other injuries. Investigators determined the accident was caused by electro-magnetic interference (EMI) from a radio tower or cellular phone.

In the U.S., there have been 100 documented cases of EMI interfering with medical equipment—not wheelchairs, but devices like pace-makers and ventilators. There have been no serious EMI-related accidents in Canada, but experts say it's only a matter of time.

"The technology is growing at an unprecedented rate," said Bernard Segal, a scientist with the Jewish General Hospital in Montreal, during an interview with Market Place. "If we don't deal with this problem, there will be many more incidents of EMI malfunctions." Market Place also

showed some graphic evidence of EMI problems: a walkie-talkie sending a nearby electric wheelchair completely out of control. Walkie-talkies, it seems, pose one of the largest threats.

What can you do to prevent EMI from causing you to crash in your power wheelchair? To start with, stay away from devices like walkie-talkies and cellular phones. But if you want to be sure, do what Jim Hill did: install a steel casing around the control box of his wheelchair to shield its delicate electronics from EMI. ●

The last word

"I don't know what it is about sailing, but when you can say, 'gone sailing', you can really say you're living; that your life has real quality..."

—SAM SULLIVAN, FOUNDER OF DISABLED SAILING ASSOCIATION OF B.C.

